

Brevity

Noah Berlatsky



Brevity

A Cinquain Collection

by Noah Berlatsky

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Brevity

After Holderlin

You used to write long poems
because you loved to sing
and loathed an ending.

Now the crows sit on the sunset
tired in their feathers, cawing
for a beginning.

Cinquains I

Cinquain

for Adelaide Crapsey

Are these
my hands or yours?
The form will shape what's held,
like water in your palms, but who
slips through?

The Moon

The moon
rises over
another stupid moon.
What a tedious reflection
on moons.

After Kobayashi Issa

The world
is a dream. Yes,
the world's a dream, I know.
There's nothing here that's real. But still.
But still...

Royal Reply to HojoDansui

Scarecrows
don't lift their hats
to anyone. But kings
can always find someone to make
a fire.

Mexico City

For lunch
ant eggs with worms.
900 pesos, though....
Only the rich can afford such
courage.

Advice

Don't write
for a living.
Don't write for a hobby.
Write because you must send an
email.

One-Minute Cinquain

What am
I but a lost
and broken thing? But/and
the meter's okay and the sigh
is true.

Per Word

I'd write
longer poems
if I were paid to write.
Epic is genius, but shorter's
priceless.

Publish Me

Cinquain,
some years from now
I will look back and know
if you were read or thought about
or loved.

Annus Mirabilis

Failure.

And then one day
someone more famous said
my poem was pretty funny.
Success!

Rigid Philosophy

The truth,
a hard cinquain,
fills the void of meaning.
But transcendence of word and truth
comes soft.

Old Pond

Modern
-ism and frogs
ribbet from trees and shoes.
We walk in someone else's plop
in time.

Fickle

Vicious
attack kitty.
Not a finger is safe
from your terrible, terrible
purring.

Adolescence

You talked
to us most when
you had the least to say.
No happy burble now. You grunt
goodbye.

Marriage

Laptops
alight, we watch
different screens side-by-side.
I don't know where you are, but you're
with me.

Good Girl

Kill shake
and chew your toy
then lick it well and sigh.
Mother or hunger, some instinct
won't die.

The Great Work Goes On

My wife
said, "Cinquains seem
like a nice hobby." Oh,
wife! You are cruel and I collapse
on cue.

Don't Beg

The dog
doesn't love me.
She just wants a cracker.
She thinks I'll give her a cracker.
That's love.

Ominous and Looming

How did
you get up on
the refrigerator,
kitty? Are you secretly a
vulture?

Lament

I win
less than I eat
and eat more than I should.
I'm lost in the kitchen. I've lost.
send help.

Our House

The flies
are happy here
flitting above the drain.
In some damp pipe, larvae look towards
heaven.

Retreat

Laundry
expands to fill
all space. All time. The house
is worn by clothes and we flap loose
worn down.

Eternal Cycle

My first
toilet still squats
somewhere back there disowned.
My last waits ahead. I sit here now
and waste.

Nostalgia

My pride
in my daughter
fills me with joy. And yet
there's sadness now as I look at
the car.

Wisdom

Hair is
growing on my
ears. What? I said I am
an ape of dignity! Respect
the growth.

Truth in Silence

Quiet,
and now I hear
my own authentic voice.
Once more I have broken my damn
headphones.

Terminal

Doctor
please, I beg you
save me from this bleak fate
and fill out the insurance form
yourself.

A Look Into the Mind of Elon Musk

Elon

Musk. Elon Musk

Elon Musk Elon Musk.

Elon Musk Elon Musk Elon

Musk. E-

lon Musk.

Elon Musk. E-

lon Musk. Elon Musk. E-

lon Musk. Elon Musk. Elon Musk.

Elon

Musk. E-

lon Musk. Elon

Musk. Elon Musk. Elon

Musk. Elon Musk. Elon Musk. E-

lon Musk.

Elon...

War on Art on Art on War

(collaged text from
Steven Pressfield, *The War of Art*, 2002.)

War on War on Art on Art

High school
is ultimate
chicken hierarchy.
The system works. The cheerleader
pecking.

Pecking
default setting.
For some of us this saves
our hard emotional upset—
the gang

going,
the tough old sarge,
like Burt Lancaster's luck,
Estranged from my tractor-trailer
sailors.

Sailors
in an ox-hide
sack must be alert for
the panic button. It slams us
open.

Open
my prayer to
my two careers, blah blah.
I didn't have the Moby Muse
pamphlet,

and let
the advocates
for the helpless boogie-
woogie in toxic force. World peace
campaign

estranged.
Do you believe?
We become Promised Land
tribal psyche ejects membrane,
the guts,

our butts.
Mother-of-all
cocked-up groveling void,
the rotten bankruptcy we fear.
Reverse

the verse,
emit evol,
these gods or avatars
take joy to the syntax of sphere.
This plane,

plainly
transient geek.
An eagle came, skipper.
a bird can't fall in a bookstore.
One guy,

one guy,
clung to King Kong
fucking like cockroaches.
We hope these are not their real names,
partner.

Partner,
what is your juice?
Hit the gym and soak up
every erg of Schwarzenegger.
Claim it.

Name it.
Xenophon quote.
“Pray to the Chevy van
and yield thusly to the business
of trash.”

Some trash,
we all need it.
Sublet shitcan healing.
Do you understand? I’m whistling
a cab.

A bad
lunch-pail payoff
slugs it out rain or snow.
Hard-core, hard-head, hard-hat love pro
fever

Needs to
play hurt in the
soundproof, bulletproof pain-
free upper-middle-class troubles.
Create!

Create
colorful stew.
Or maybe hang around
into a trilogy of un-
lived life.

Unlived
Jungian supreme
workshop cancer. Music
one stroke poignancy has always
Billy.

Bill Gates,
peg-leg critter,
is sustenance. Is Can.
Garbage. Yogis. Experts. Is
Parking.

Parking
in his doughnut
not in his hole. A/C
puffing on his fat Cadillac,
dues paid.

You pay
the slick dude hack.
Sell out, what's hot, the market
is the best part of yourself. The
truth is

truth. Is
Jesus, Karl Marx
emasculatation and
the spawning wreckage of freedom
fallen.

Fallen,
the humanist
autonomous whisker
enters Socrates. Life does
evolve.

Evolve
super-angel!
Angels work for Nick Cage.
I believe in magic human
bump blade.

He made
eternity
from the fifth envelope.
Animating spirit not yet
high school.

Dirty Sexy Cinquains

(poems inspired by the more risqué verse
in *The Penguin Book of Haiku*,
ed. and trans. Adam Kern, 2018)

Erupting Wealth

Indulge
in whacking off
as a business venture.
Avoid love's gaping pitfalls and—
success!

Death and Life

Widow
walking the path
like a sinuous snake,
I, the priest, will fill your ache with
knowledge.

Double Duck

Cocky
eider duck gulps
down the toothsome clam. Then
another cocky one dives in
for pearls.

The Cry

Wise men
say when death comes
men speak the truth. Women,
though...even wise men don't know. Oh.
Oh. Ohhh!

Summer Flower

Water
down her breasts; how
hot today! He removed
his pants for the breeze, and a bee
stung hard.

Free Speech

Every
lip aquiver,
mouth to mouth dissolving
in the discourse. Let us reason
once more.

And Time

Falling
blossoms. Blossoms
that remain will also
fall. So why keep these petals for
yourself?

Her Own

“Sheltered
Girl,” means that she
doesn’t even dream of cock.
Perhaps because she has her own
dildo.

Ban Those Books

Yes, porn’s
fucking danger-
ous. Try that fucking wood-
block pose, you’ll surely dislocate
your...arm.

One Art

The art
of drawing cunt
is the art of looking
at cunt. But bashful poets see
nothing.

Relief From Sin

Accursed
with great hardship—
nothing softens the pain
but worshipping your Goddess of
Mercy.

Grim But Funny

Father
is dying. We
should be respectful. But
bowels continue to fart. Life smells
like death.

Wikipedia

Many
important facts
are recorded there. Yet
it does not say, "Prefers it up
the ass."

Zhuangzi

He woke
and did not know
if he was a man who
had dreamed he was fucking a butterfly...

Bad Horse

The rose
mallow roadside
devoured by my horse.
But I'll eat something else upstairs,
madam!

Thief

Ninja
at the barred gate.
Deft fingers play the lock
till he slips in like a knowing
penis.

Cycle

Women's
life; come out of
a hole. Then try to fill
a hole, until you're buried in
a hole.

Excessive Politeness

Still beg-
ging for favors
from each other al-
though both of them are already
cumming.

Dirty Sexy Cinquain

Fuck fuck

fuck fuck fuck fuck

fuck fuck fuck fuck fuck fuck

fuck fuck fuck fuck fuck fuck fuck fuck

fuck fuck.

Cinquains II

Here

Here is
not anywhere
but where there is not there
I am and don't mind the waiting
in here.

In here
is there any
there built for minding where
there is but not mine anywhere
that is.

That is
minding minding
far and near and any
there built not built from words and mind
here is.

Big Dog

When will
you grow into
your paws, puppy? Your legs
sit in pontoons, paddling on towards
bigger.

Stimming

Click pen,
up down click. At
school desk, click, work desk, click.
Clock tick. Eyebrows grey. Life click lived
by click.

233 to 218 to 233

I am
more of myself
now that the weight I lost
has at last returned in joyful
self-love.

Damn It

I chase
failure around
the park. Around the park.
Around. And failure at last has
caught me.

This Is Just To Say

I spit
up all the plums
in the fridge. Forgive me.
So sweet. So true. Poetry makes
me sick.

ER vs Scrubs

My life
in the balance,
do I want the doctors
to be having sex? Or telling
fart jokes?

No Inessential Thing

I step
from my nostrils
unencumbered by past
snacks. Yes, I fly without socks or
triumph.

Brunch

Every-
one wants brunch. They
love brunch. Which is why we
cannot have brunch. Get away from
our brunch!

Mind vs. Cat

My brain
Persists in call-
ing the cat "Fitz," although
I know his name is really
Bubba.

Go Down, Life

Enough
of lust: old, dull.
broken hinge in rotten
door. It doesn't work. It won't
shut up.

We Know

We know
that knowledge sinks
in a puddle, slurping
thought like a mop. The ocean nods
you know.

Someday

Someday
I'll forget it,
this poem about this
poem. The tree shivers, alive.
It stops.

All or Nothing

Are there
no clouds in a
blue-white sky? Or is the
blue tinged white because all the sky
is cloud?

Outside

A bee
close by. A bird
above the house. A plane
flies low in my dream. They all fit
in there.

Horticulture

Water
the small android
each day and it will sprout
into utopia with leaf-
green spires.

Still There

Too late
for the roses,
they have all bloomed and gone.
except the blue rose. There is no
blue rose.

More Cats

The more
cats that you have,
the more cats that you
love, the more cats that you have to
watch die.

Change

We bathe
in CO₂.
We swim in heat. All this
abundance for ghosts and rust and
silence.

Cost Benefit

Jesus
died for something.
Someone's always dying
for something. But they stay dead for
nothing.

Mystery Poem

"When drunk
with wine, the head..."
That's all of George Trakl
I've read. Where from there his head goes,
who knows?

Visual Pleasure

Lot's wife
looked behind her
and saw Eurydice.
Is it the wrong gaze or the wrong
body?

Practising Angels

Who are
the poets in
these old anthologies?
Someone thought they mattered. But now
we know...

Ideal Reader

Read those
poems quickly.
Don't let the meaning catch
you. The point is just to say you
read them.

Kill Yr Idols

This po-
etry is a
serious thing, said Phil-
lip Levine. It isn't, Phillip.
Fuck off.

Give Me Back My Wig

Gator
got my big hair.
Now I sit in the swamp
and cry. Catfish on my head till
I die.

I die
bald and toothless.
Gum that gator till
he moans. Now got that gator in
my bones.

My bones
commence to lose
their thick and hairy pelt.
Bald head's the biggest rankest thing
you smelt.

You smelt
and lost your hair.
It crawled right off your head.
Croc gulped it down and now he's sad
and dead.

Big dead's
the one sad thing
saves my hair for later.
Swamp zombie hair's hunting down that
gator.

The Interior Landscape

(poems inspired by
The Interior Landscape: Classical Tamil Love Poetry,
trans. by A.K. Ramanujan, 1967)

Aubade

Cu kaw.
The cock's harsh beak
tears the night from the dawn,
and you from me. My heart longs for
darkness.

Where You Are

Do they
have lillies where
you are? And gulping fat
gold koi? And loneliness? Is that
there too?

Bane

Love is
like heartburn when
you eat that one food, your
bane. Love waits for you to look on
someone.

Apart

We two,
as far apart
as clouds and rock, till rain
fell and mingled with red earth. Now
we're one.

Affliction

They say
heaven is sweet.
But what's even sweeter
is the affliction when your love
walks by.

Dawn and Noon

Evening
was dawn when you
were here. But now that I'm
companionless, even noon is
evening.

Grace

When you
held me I was
as graceful as the moon
gliding over silent water.
But now

Summer Love

His love
grew ripe, a smooth
plum, heavy and pregnant
with sweet juices. And then, alas,
it fell.

Lost

Honor
culture, virtue
kindness; I had them all.
Then I saw your cold eyes and had
nothing.

Rotting

My love
will dry up like
an egg gone bad if he
does not return to break my shell
and feast.

Revenge

This town
doesn't know my
sleeplessness and sorrow.
It is so dull it makes me sick.
Burn it.

Water

I thought
of you and thought
of you. I lift each thought
of you like water cradled in
my palm.

Evil Dream

(An algorithmic cinquain reading
through Pope's *Iliad*)

Evil Dream

canst O
ill directs to
to monarch thou in lead
e'en the for at destruction
awake

and the
resolves a vain
nor what what eager the
first around the the and now
lifts the

range to
his calls counsels
and my as dream same dost
fits in whom waste awake and just
lead now

lofty
now Juno's hangs
nodding hear vision and
first with move mine spoke whom of
doubt
by it

us to
the council by
some heaps blackening spread
the the the region footsteps soars
heralds

will the
murmurs of his
sceptre form'd he gift
hand Thyestes the Argos bright
thus of

and with
believed was whole
feeble armies Greece in
arms baffled number held tens have
by years

labours
decay'd the
ever our summon and
may to your more unknown mighty
willows

when when
lofty the groves
their and urge and thick to
had fall their the fly and fruits in
flying

be cares
the the vessels
divine the bear to the
your employ trust the obey'd
from of

to all
chief with and the
reveal'd resents may
secret Jove wrath plebian or
to in

our not
usurping him
troops fiercest the upon
old the with deeps the the the tongue
no bold

all style
to soul leg head
possess'd most of they
the throne a complain inflames and
chests of

thirst price
supplies leader's
love kingly must for more
him Phrygian busy may we
and long

springs kings
replies state all
the to of powers men
general be shore no forbear to
the bends

rise eyes
fears tears thought yield
field praised attend hung tongue
vow now cry lie more tender main
seat beat

tears blame
heaven air roll'd
young flew we slain last men
way laws train main to die known slow
excel

decree
thee Troy wall fall
power fed thy spires share way
eyes field in arms skies wings resounds
land play

the that
in from the so
in each in not collects
the towers like his great his Jove
and say

since and
we but O or
to a daughters the what
their names their numbers and their chiefs
I sing

Cinquains III

The Weed

A weed
as tall as me;
cut it down, it grows back
as tall as before. Unless it
doesn't.

To Do

I did
not finish all
items on my to do
list today. Finished only one:
fail.

Hold for Poet

Thank you
for your patience.
Our poets are helping
other readers. Please do not turn
the page.

Chronic Pain

When you
hurt constantly
there's not much more to you
than hurting constantly. You hurt.
You're hurt.

Dog Poem

Reading
poems makes me
write poems. Like a dog
who vomits and then eats its own
poems.

Romance

Happy
ever after
but only if you end
the story now, before the last
plot twist.

Blue Note

Be bop
toot toot, rebop,
honk, funk on horn resound
-ed for poems written down
silent.

Again

I read
again, again
because I want to find
something within again, again.
But can't.

Alert

New tech
allows us to
stay in constant contact.
I will text you this insight now.
Hello.

Search

Inside
my phone my dreams
scramble like a spider
that spins gold silk from eye and click
and id.

War Poem

Poets
circle battles
like birds circle battles.
The pickings are easy and taste
profound.

2024

Goodbye
democracy.
What an ugly baby
you were, spitting blood and hate. But
worse dead.

Eat Shit and Die

The work,
toad, is ugly.
So's the toad of no work.
They squat in my throat by turns and
swallow.

Traffic Jam

Outside
keeps pressing in
because we're fucking stuck
together at the window which
won't shut.

Advice to Writers

Forget
hard work or craft.
Take care instead that you
are born to wealth. Also known as
genius.

Question

If I
write enough bad
poems very quickly
will I then become a real
poet?

A Poem in Yellow After Jerome Rothenberg After Tristan Tzara

O, slide,
angel, your eye
into my yellow fruit.
It craves your juicy hand and sings
dingdong.

Christmas Poem

Gentiles
thank you for your
women. And for the Christ
who does such lovely tricks up on
the Cross.

Noumenon

Freud sits
smoking, bearded
inside the subconscious,
Like God, your true self who doesn't
exist.

In Blackest Night

In my
dreams I watched *Green
Lantern*. It wasn't bad.
but I think I need dreams that are
better.

The Incredible Hulk

Hulk poop
on Spider-Man.
Hulk poop on X-Men.
Hulk is full of rage. Also poop.
It stinks.

Seeping Evocation

Snap spine
of ear and thought
in fungal cave abyss.
Maelstrom of vomit stain the pure
beast's scar.

Call for Cthulhu

The spot
on the screen is
growing. They are coming
through the phone. What bleak app, rust
red,
rises?

Dealer of Souls

Bellow
high-pitched demon
into the great void's vastness.
Extroverted melancholy
thrashes.

Vader Speaks

The force
in everything
holds the plot together.
Without it there's no meaning just
blank space.

Spock

The good
of the many
Outweighs the good of one.
At least when an alien is
the one.

The Matrix

Robots
inject cinquains
into the tender brain
of an ape nailed to a dying
robot.

Ghosts

Nothing
is there but still
they keep dying. They say
nothing is there, so you should stop
dying.

Labor

I made
a box of time,
of hours and days and years.
It grew heavy and I grew light,
unmade.

The Dream

I have
forgotten my
locker combination.
Years go by. It won't open. Still,
I try.

Midnight

Tired
and I should sleep.
But if I go to bed
I know that tomorrow I must
wake up.

Identify

Am I
am I am I
neurodivergent? I
am a self-rotating fan of
I am.

Relativity

Weldon
Kees is little
known, but better known than
me. Am I better known than you?
Maybe.

Celan

A voice
of ashes and
they walk with ashes in
the throat to choke out a black dust.
No voice.

Celan

No voice.
The almond waits
a seed that will open
like a wound in the static's mouth.
A voice.

Out of Time

Being
is becoming
not-being, like strumming
a lute that breaks. The song is not
being.

Astronomy

The sun
goes down early.
The night seeps in. The earth
tilts with a rakish flair, as if
it cares.

Lament

Today
I have not done
what I hoped. Instead, I
just got older and wrote a sad
cinquain.

The Bread of Time

The bread
of time is soft
like dough and colorless.
It has no taste or shape. But it
has weight.

Study Break

Bookmarks
keep us in place
and time, so that we don't
get lost in word or plot before
the end.

Destiny

The stars
don't care about
your horoscope. They hang
indifferent, upside down, reading
Tarot.

The Pathetic Fallacy

The trees
must pity us
our sighs and self-pity.
Better they think to live without
a thought.

The Present

The clock
falls off the wall.
There is no time. There is
no clock. The words tick on and then
they stop.

Tomorrow

Hope and
despair joined at
the lip of an abyss
without a name for now. But soon.
And then...

Metamorphosis

The cries
of cicadas
crunch underfoot. The dry husks
of yesterday's passion stick to
new shoes.

Groung

The crane
is not a crane.
but the echo of a voice.
It cannot find its home and so
it sings.

The Snowman

Poets
love an absence.
Snow not falling, a walk
they don't need to shovel. No work.
Not bad.

Destiny

Greatness

is a cat at
a gate it can't get through.
It feigns indifference and waits.
And sleeps.

Campfire Story

The man
whispers hoarsely.
“Listen,” he says. “Listen.”
But he's not there. The speaker's dead.
I'm dead.

Lament

I know
the assignment.
I know when I must turn
it in. But will someone tell me
the fee?

Selfless

My self
pinches my self
like an old shoe. Blisters
on my blisters, where I to I
am worn.

Diaspora

Who are
my ancestors?
Who knows? I am not them.
They are not me. I'm not alone.
I'm here.

Inspiration

After Maruja Mallo

A one-
celled sea creature
wiggles like an ink blot
from my brain to my hand. Or to
someone's.

Nat Ćmiel

I like
to be someone
else. I like to be not
here. I like to be the virus
speaking.

The Mystery

Take death
and put it in
a cozy box as small
as death. They all will think it is
a clue.

Less

Meaning
is but the half.
Meaninglessness, the whole.
With less, what's left but a nest for
meaning?

Metaphor

The word
is a machine
for constructing untruth.
Open your mouth to find a pearl
or not.

Night and Day

Dream
of dawn at night
or dream of night at dawn.
To be where you are not is what
is thought.

The Last Cinquain

The last
words here won't last
after you are done, at last
the bee's hum fades, no sound that lasts
and lasts.

Brevity

When I
was young I wrote
poems no one would read
and thought my thought would be
something
to read.

To read
the past is not
to see what could have been
but to inscribe on self a path
to self.

To self
I write myself
a smaller part, a brief
poem left on an unread page
when I.

“Notes For Cinquains I, II, III”

(in alphabetical order by poem)

“After Kobayashi Issa”

A faithful-ish translation of Kobayashi Issa’s most famous haiku, written after his daughter’s death.

“Blue Note”

The title is a reference to the jazz label.

“The Bread of Time”

Philip Levine’s memoir is called *The Bread of Time*, in reference to lines by Wallace Stevens.

“Celan”

Both these cinquains are inspired by the work of German poet Paul Celan.

“Cinquain”

Adelaide Crapsey invented the cinquain form I’m using. This poem echoes her cinquain “Amaze.”

“Dealer of Souls”

Inspired by the album of the same name by German metal band Gomorra.

“Eat Shit and Die”

This is partially inspired by Philip Larkin’s poem “Toads”.

“Give Me Back My Wig”

The title is from the song of the same name by Chicago bluesman Hound Dog Taylor, the first artist to record for Alligator Records.

“Good Girl”

Our pitbull is named Goose. She shows up now and then.

“Groung”

The title means “crane” in Armenian. Inspired by early 20th century singer Zabelle Panosian’s song of the same name.

“Here”

Inspired by a number of Robert Creeley poems that use the same title.

“Inspiration”

Maruja Mallo was a Spanish surrealist painter. This poem is inspired by an excerpt of her writing collected in Penelope Rosemont’s *Surrealist Women: An International Anthology*.

“Kill Yr Idols”

The title is also the title of a Sonic Youth song.

“Metamorphosis”

Inspired by the Greek poet Phoebe Giannisi’s book *Cicada*.

“Mind vs. Cat”

Inspired by our kitty Gus Gus, or maybe he’s named Luna.

“Nat Ćmiel”

Nat Ćmiel, aka yeule, is a Singapore electronica musician. This poem is particularly inspired by the track “My Name is Nat Ćmiel” from *Glitch Princess*.

“Old Pond”

This is a response to Basho’s famous haiku.

“A Poem in Yellow After Jerome Rothenberg After Tristan Tzara”

This poem is loosely based on Rothenberg’s poem “A Poem in Yellow After Tristan Tzara.” Tzara was the founder of dadaism in Switzerland during World War I.

Jerome Rothenberg is an American avant garde poet and translator.

“Practising Angels”

Inspired by a 1986 anthology of the same name edited by Michael Mayo and dedicated to contemporary San Francisco poets.

“Royal Reply to HojoDansui”

HojoDansui’s original poem as translated by Asatoro Miyamori reads, “The Scarecrow does not uncover/Even to His Imperial Majesty.”

“Seeping Evocation”

A tribute to the album of the same name by death/black/doom metal band Acausal Intrusion.

“The Snowman”

The title is a reference to the Wallace Stevens poem of the same name; the poem is a reply of sorts to Donald Justice’s “Absences.”

“Spock”

In the film *The Wrath of Khan*, “The good of the many outweighs the good of the one” is what Spock says shortly before his death.

“Visual Pleasure”

The title references the famous Laura Mulvey essay, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema.”

“This Is Just to Say”

After the William Carlos Williams poem of the same name.

Notes for “Dirty Sexy Cinquains”

The poems in this section are all inspired by haiku in Adam Kern’s *The Penguin Book of Haiku*, 2018. Some keep the sense of the original more or less intact; others explore further afield, so to speak. The notes below identify the authors of the most direct sources where applicable in alphabetical order by cinquain.

- “And Time”: Ryokan (also Andrew Marvell)
- “Bad Horse”: Basho
- “Ban Those Books”: unnamed author
- “The Cry”: Konjin
- “Cycle”: unnamed author
- “Death and Life”: unnamed author
- “Double Duck”: numerous haiku about seafood
- “Erupting Wealth”: Sanko
- “Excessive Politeness”: Sosen
- “Free Speech”: Shuchin
- “Grim But Funny”: Soka
- “Her Own”: Bunji
- “One Art”: unnamed author (title from Elizabeth Bishop)
- “Relief From Sin”: Konojo
- “Summer Flower”: Shohaku
- “Thief”: Oei
- “Wikipedia”: Ryusha and Saika
- “Zhuangzi”: many haiku reference the Chinese scholar and his dream

Notes for “The Interior Landscape”

Poems in this section are all inspired by *The Interior Landscape: Classical Tamil Love Poetry*, trans. by A.K. Ramanujan in 1967. They are more variations than translations. The notes below identify authors of the most direct sources where applicable in alphabetical order by *cinquain*.

“Affliction”: Kapilar

“Apart”: Cempulappeyanirar

“Aubade”: Al lur Nanmullai

“Bane”: Millaipperunkantan

“Dawn and Noon”: Milaipperun Kantan

“Grace”: Maturai Eruttalan Centamputan

“Lost”: Narrinai

“Revenge”: Auvaiyar

“Rotting”: Kilimankalankirar

“Summer Love”: Varumulaiyaritti

“Water”: Auvaiyar

“Where You Are”: Mamlatan

Notes for “War on Art on Art on War”

The poem in this section is a collaged text from Steven Pressfield, *The War of Art*, 2002. In general, each stanza uses text from a single kindle page of the book.

Notes for “Evil Dream”

The poem in this section is an algorithmic reading through Alexander Pope’s translation of the *Iliad*, loosely inspired by John Cage’s reading through of Pound’s *Cantos*. The poem starts with “Canst thou, with all a monarchs cares oppressed,” using the first word of each line in sequence to fill out the first two cinquains. If a word would go over the syllable count for the cinquain line, I skipped that line and went to the next. The next two cinquains use the second word of each line, and so forth until stanzas 19 and 20 use the 10th word in each line (unless a line did not have ten words, in which case it was skipped.)

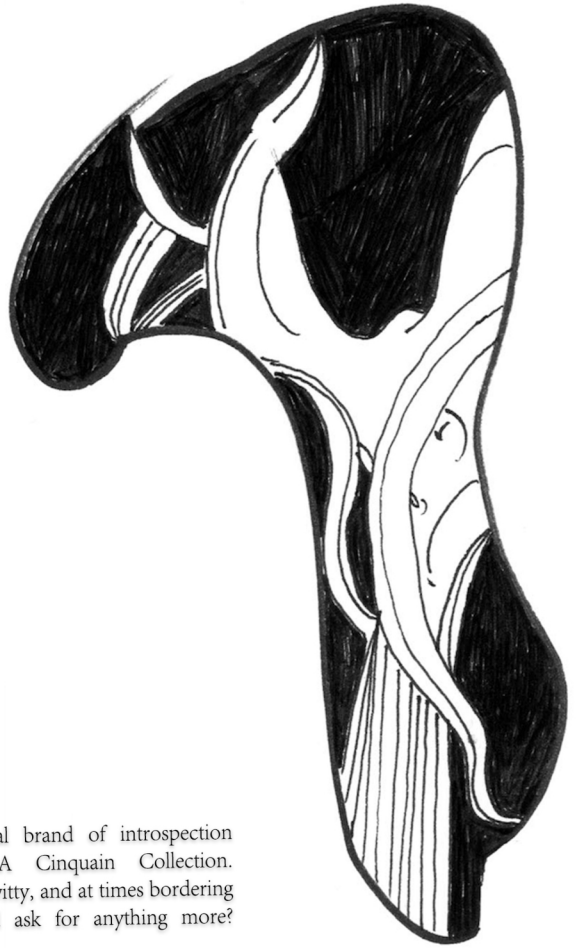
There are some algorithmic errors, both accidental and otherwise.

Acknowledgements

- “Brevity (*After Holderlein*)” first appeared in *Blue Unicorn*.
- “The Great Work Goes On” first appeared in the zine *Spurned* from Gnashing Teeth.
- “Hold for Poet,” “Ideal Reader,” “Marriage,” “Retreat,” “Someday” “Stimming,” and “The Weed,” first appeared in *Five Fleas*.
- “A Poem in Yellow After Jerome Rothenberg After Tristan Tzara” and one stanza of “War on War on Art on Art” first appeared in *dadakuku*.
- “Mexico City” first appeared in *Panorama*.

About

Noah Berlatsky is a freelance writer from Chicago. His full length collections are *Not Akhmatova* (Ben Yehuda Press, 2024), *Gnarly Thumbs* (Anxiety Press, 2025), and *Meaning Is Embarrassing* (Ranger, 2025). He has chapbooks published and/or forthcoming with the Origami Poems Project, above/ground, and LJMcD Communications.



Noah Berlatsky weaves his special brand of introspection into each verse of *Brevity A Cinquain Collection*. His work is bold, sexy, innovative, witty, and at times bordering on satirical madness. Who could ask for anything more?

— ROBERTA BEACH JACOBSON, Editor, *Five Fleas Itchy Poetry*



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